

American Observer

A free, virtuous, and enlightened people must know well the great principles and causes on which their happiness depends.

—James Monroe

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Progress Is Made In Conservation of Soil

Federal Government's Program Undertakes to Eliminate Waste of Past Years

PROGRAM RESULTS STUDIED

Experiments Conducted in Many Parts of Country Produce Heartening Developments

Five years ago this spring, great clouds of dust swirled over the Middle West, so thick at times that they blotted out the sun. From farms in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, soil was carried as far east as the Atlantic Ocean. Dust sifted under doors and around windows; it killed cattle and blanketed gardens, filled culverts and buried fenceposts—in general, it made life miserable for the people of the "dust bowl."

Although these dust storms ruined many acres of land and brought much discomfort, they performed one valuable service. They awakened the American people to the problem of soil erosion, and to the need for an energetic program of soil conservation. More than anything else, the spectacle of fertile topsoil being blown off rich farmland by the ton aroused the nation to the seriousness of the situation.

Work in Progress

Since that time, "erosion" has become a familiar term. The federal government, under President Roosevelt, has set to work to save the soil. The Soil Conservation Service has been created, and other government agencies are cooperating with it in the fight against wasteful use of the nation's land. Although many activities of the Roosevelt administration have aroused bitter controversy, this phase of the New Deal has received almost unanimous praise, because it is generally recognized that soil conservation is vital if the United States is to be prosperous in the centuries to come.

There is a certain amount of soil erosion under natural conditions, but it takes place much more rapidly when the trees, the grass, and the small plants which normally hold the soil in place are removed, leaving it bare and loose. Then water running through it and wind blowing over it pick up small particles and carry them away. In his book, "Rich Land, Poor Land," Stuart Chase describes the process of soil erosion in this way:

Here is a sloping cellar door. Take a watering can and sprinkle a quart of water on the top of the door. Measure the amount that slides off. Except for a little evaporation, the whole quart will be at the bottom, and it gets there almost instantly. Now tack a piece of thick carpet on the door; to cement it on would be still better. Fill the can and pour a quart of water on the top of the carpet. Your measuring trough at the bottom will be lucky if it receives the merest trickle at the beginning. Observe that the trickle continues for a long time as the water slowly filters through the mat.

This is the story of erosion in its simplest form. The cellar door is any land with a slope; the canful of water is rainfall; the bare boards are bare fields, or fields cultivated between the crop rows with the rows running down the slope; the carpet is natural cover, either grass or forest. In the first case, most of the water comes down, dissolving the topsoil and taking it along. In the second case, the cover absorbs the water, puts much of it into ground storage, to be slowly released. Almost no soil comes down. Broadly speaking, American agriculture is a bare cellar door without any carpet on it.

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SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

RICH LAND

The More Convenient Season

By WALTER E. MYER

I talked the other day with a high school student who is to be graduated this month with grades well below the average. He hopes next year to go to college, and he plans eventually to be an engineer. I asked him if he could enter a good university, one which could offer him the technical course he needs, on the grades he has made in high school. He admitted that he could not, but said he could enter some small college. He would make a good record then, and from this small, low-standard college, he could be admitted after two years, to the university of his choice.

Perhaps this plan will work out. Miracles may always be hoped for, and once in a while something approaching the miraculous does occur. Occasionally we witness a complete change in an individual. A student who has been sluggish or inattentive or indifferent all through his high school career may face about upon entering college and make a different record for himself. The experiment is worth trying, if the student really understands his situation, realizes the danger of his position, and faces the future with unwavering determination. But students who have wasted their opportunities to date should be made to understand that the transformation will not come automatically. They should understand the tremendous force of inertia, which tends to keep one following the beaten paths. They should know that there will be as many distracting influences in college as there were in high school; as many temptations luring one to idleness or to unconstructive activities. They should know that transformation will come only through the exercise of will power to an extent they have never experienced before. If, knowing that, they are determined to begin the hard fight upward, they should have every encouragement.

But by no means should there be encouragement of the notion that the past record doesn't matter. It should be pointed out as a danger signal. One who does poorer work than he is capable of doing does more than merely to waste his time. He establishes habits of work; habits of spending his time—habits which tend to continue and which, if continued, mean never-ending mediocrity. One can, by application, soon make up for the lack of information or technical training resulting from shoddy school-work. He can quickly add to his inadequate store of knowledge. But the breaking of long-established habits is another matter; a more difficult job. The time for one to begin the process of breaking them is this very hour, whether he has finished a high school or a college course or not. There should be no waiting for "a more convenient season"; no waiting for a new set of conditions under which it is hoped that reform will come easily. It is well to have lofty ambitions, but only if they are accompanied by action in keeping with them.

Puerto Rico Wants Changes In Status

United States Territory in the Caribbean Not Satisfied With Existing Conditions

ECONOMIC SITUATION POOR

Reduction of U. S. Quotas on Sugar and Fall in Prices Present Difficult Problems

For many years Americans reading their newspapers at breakfast have noticed vague reference to troubles in Puerto Rico. Although seldom important enough to make the headlines, they have been, nevertheless, persistent. There have been stories of riots and strikes, demands for independence, shots fired at the American governor, assassinations, demands for admission into the Union as a state, complaints over the reduction of sugar quotas, over wages-and-hour legislation, arrests of revolutionists followed by conviction and imprisonment. Thus, while Puerto Rico has never figured prominently enough to become a major political issue, enough news has filtered through to the American people, and with sufficient persistence, to make it generally known that matters have not been going as smoothly as they might in the largest of our nearby island territories.

Position of Puerto Rico

Seen on the map, Puerto Rico's severely rectangular shape renders it uninteresting in comparison with the three larger islands of the Greater Antilles—Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica. Slightly smaller than the state of Connecticut in area, it has somewhat the same shape, stretching about 95 miles east and west over a mountainous tract 35 miles wide.

However uninteresting it may appear to be on the map, Puerto Rico is quite impressive when approached from the sea. At a distance one sees the bulk of blue mountains stretching all the way across the horizon, fading into the distance in successive waves of level peaks. Against them in the lowlands lie pale green sugar-cane fields—sometimes with wisps of gray smoke sweeping across them from the interior where farmers are burning over dry meadow land.

When one comes nearer, the characteristics which distinguish Puerto Rico from neighboring lands become more apparent. San Juan, for instance, is unlike the sleepy ports of nearby Caribbean islands. The capital of the island and (with 137,000 inhabitants) its largest city, it bustles with activity. The docks and quays are loud with clamor as trucks backfire and maneuver into loading positions, as trolley cars clatter over switches, steam winches and cranes whistle and bang about the business of moving cargoes on and off the many ships in port. It is in San Juan that the influence of the United States is most keenly felt. English is widely spoken, business is carried on along American lines, and Americans are generally in control of the warehouses, banks, and systems of communication and transportation.

In the interior, however, life is much quieter. In the agricultural regions where the island's chief crops—sugar, coffee, tobacco, pineapples, oranges, and grapefruit—are produced, the land is very green and fertile, but crowded. Little villages of earthen huts lie close together, and in-

(Concluded on page 3)

Wide Disagreement Noted Among Authorities on Issue of Neutrality

AS the two opposing camps in Europe continue to strengthen their positions, the problem of formulating a policy of neutrality is of paramount interest in the United States. Congressional committees, after lengthy hearings in which various proposals have been considered, are now preparing reports to Congress. Recently Secretary of State Cordell Hull outlined his views. In general, his six-point program would restrict American citizens and American ships from traveling in combat areas, regulate the collection of funds in this country for foreign nations at war, and compel the transfer of titles to goods sold abroad before the goods could be shipped. These proposals have been widely accepted, but his central point, that the President should be given discretion as to the sale of arms to nations at war, is being hotly debated.

Mr. Hull thinks that if the President has the power, in the event of war, to sell arms to the democracies, we can help to stave off a European conflict, since the axis powers, convinced that they face overwhelming odds, will not commit further acts of aggression. His views, due to his long service in Congress and the added prestige of his present high post, will necessarily be given much consideration.

the axis powers win at all, they must win quickly, which we cannot arrive to prevent. In a long war, they are sure to lose, whether we are involved against them or not."

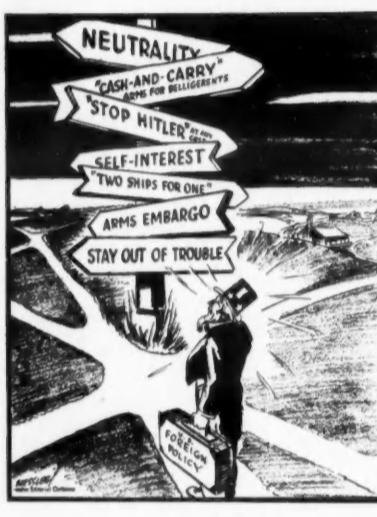
He believes that "good American horse-sense" would prevent our emotions from dragging us into the holocaust; and that the idea that we must "make the world safe for democracy" is fallacious because we would "have to begin the defense of democracy in Europe—assuming it to exist there at all—by destroying our democracy at home." Dictatorships are established because of internal causes, not external pressure, he thinks, and while he admits that their governments have been aggressive, he justifies it by saying that the history of the world is the story of aggression.

Our ships can be kept out of foreign danger areas, and due to our strong navy our citizens can be afforded enough protection to prevent our entanglement, Mr. Eliot says. After all, our influence can be used without our entering the war, and our greatest responsibility is to our country and the children, he concludes.

Walter Lippmann, widely read columnist, presents the other side when he says: "They talk as if the issue before Congress were whether the United States will go into or stay out of the next war. That is not the issue. The issue is whether there is or is not going to be another world war."

Citing the history of the World War and the War of 1812, Mr. Lippmann recalls that in both cases we were dragged into the conflict. Before the War of 1812, the United States adopted an embargo which nearly ruined the New England states financially, he points out, adding that in spite of that measure, we were drawn into the war and were invaded and the capital at Washington burned. Such incidents, he says, force him to the conclusion that "there is no guarantee against entanglement in a world war except successful diplomacy which prevents the war."

Instead of saying that war is unavoidable and that the only course for America is to plan ways to keep out, Mr. Lippmann argues that we "should use our great authority, our great resources, and our great strength" in the world. He condemns the theory that we should tie the hands of the President as we hide behind an airtight neutrality law, for only by preventing a world war can we be sure that we will not be involved.



BRESSLER IN KINGSTON (N.Y.) DAILY FREEMAN

But his position has already stirred up much controversy, at the center of which is a difference over fundamental principles. One school of thought believes that the main object of neutrality should be to keep us out of war at any cost; the other, thinking it unlikely that we could stay out of a conflict, says our policy should be designed so as to do everything possible to help prevent a war.

The opinions of the first group are ably presented by George Fielding Eliot. Writing in *Current History*, Mr. Eliot says unequivocally that in case of war in Europe, America can stay out. He supports his contention by examining the arguments on the other side.

To the view that we "cannot afford to see Great Britain and France 'go under,' leaving us face to face with the victorious axis powers," he says that there is almost no chance of that happening. "If

"America on the Warpath," by K. R. Martin. *Forum*, June 1939, pp. 305-309.

The theme of Mr. Martin's article is that America should mind her own business, refrain from becoming entangled in the conflicting ideologies of Europe, and exert our energies to making this country admirable and efficient. Disapproving of the present policy

of the government because it is leading us away from the course of isolation, he says that we should begin now to make neutrality a state of mind so that a world crisis will not upset our national balance or sanity.

"Swiss Democracy Goes Into Action," by Griffin Barry. *Travel*, June 1939, pp. 26-29, 40-41.

"What will become of Switzerland?" Mr. Barry answers this question by showing how the fear of war and air invasion has knit the Swiss into even closer bonds of national pride and determination to keep neutral. He believes that the Swiss would resist invasion of any kind with their small but well-trained army of civilians.

"What Business Kills," by Carl Dreher. *Harpers*, June 1939, pp. 44-55.

Speaking from 20 years' experience as a worker, professional man and executive, this writer says that business, as it is practiced today, kills the integrity of men, wastes resources, and is divorced from human welfare and scientific effort. He believes that reform



COURTESY RKO RADIO PICTURES
FROM A SCENE IN THE MOTION PICTURE OF MAXWELL ANDERSON'S "WINTERSET"

Maxwell Anderson Gives Views On Theater in New Book of Essays

AMONG contemporary American playwrights, none has a more enviable reputation than Maxwell Anderson. Seldom does a theatrical season pass without one of his plays being among the real hits of Broadway. He has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize and two of his plays have received the prize of the New York dramatic critics. Although he has written an "appalling number of failures," Mr. Anderson's position in the theater is generally recognized.

Not only are there few better craftsmen in the theater today than Mr. Anderson, but few have thought more profoundly about the problems of the drama and its role in the cultural life of a people. While other dramatists may not always agree with his philosophical concepts, they nevertheless respect his views, which always reflect mature thought and contemplation. The heart of his philosophy is contained in a recently published book of essays by Maxwell Anderson: "The Essence of Tragedy and Other Footnotes and Papers" (Washington, D. C., 726 Jackson Place. \$1.25).

These essays, dealing with various aspects of Mr. Anderson's art as a playwright, are written in the same incisive style as most of his plays. He explores many branches of the field of drama, giving his views on the function of the theater, on political phi-

losophy, and, in general, the role which the theater must play as an art form in any nation's cultural development. Though perhaps not intended for the layman, few can read the essays without receiving inspiration from them.

Mr. Anderson takes a broad view of the function of the theater in the life of peoples. "The theater at its best," he writes, "is much older than the doctrine of evolution, but its one faith, asseverated again and again for every age and every year, is a faith in evolution, in the reaching and the climb of men toward distant goals, glimpsed but never seen, perhaps never achieved, or achieved only to be passed impatiently on the way to a more distant horizon."

The artist, throughout the ages, has been better able to give expression to these evolutionary aspirations of mankind than anyone else. "To my mind a love of truth and justice is bound up in men with a belief in their destiny; and the belief in their destiny is of one piece with national and international culture. The glimpse of the godlike in man occasionally vouchsafed in a work of art or prophecy is the vital spark in a world that would otherwise stand stock still or slip backward down the grade, devoid of motive power."

Such a concept is essential to the progress of a nation, to the development of the cultural, the truly eternal values of any civilization. "A nation is not a nation until it has a culture which deserves and receives affection from the people themselves," Mr. Anderson writes. As yet, the United States has developed no such art, but the author has hope for the future, hope in a renaissance of our own. "If the time arrives," he continues, "when our young men and women lose their extravagant faith in the dollar and turn to the arts we may then become a great nation, nurturing great artists of our own, proud of our own culture and unified by that culture into a civilization worthy of our unique place on this rich and lucky continent between its protecting seas."

The very nature of Mr. Anderson's credo precludes the inclusion of the ephemeral, either in the theater or in any of the other arts. He seeks to give expression to that nobility of character which has been responsible for what progress the world has made up to now. But in the front ranks of the ascent will stand the great poets, "for what the poets are always asking for, visioning, and projecting is man as he must and will be, man a step above and beyond his present, man as he may be glimpsed on some horizon of dream, a little nearer what he himself wishes to become."

With the Magazines

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in business will only come when businessmen themselves become good citizens and take an active interest in their community's progress.

"After the New Deal," by George Soule. *New Republic*, June 7, 1939, pp. 122-125.

In the last of this series, Mr. Soule devotes his article to a discussion of government spending. He believes that government operation of such industries as housing, utilities, and railroads is essential because the government machine can "clear the channels for the flow of money by adjusting costs and prices, as private industry seems unable to do." Reorganization of industry by government, he thinks, would expand production and consumption of useful goods, lower prices, and increase incomes.

"That Illogical, Muddling Nation," by Harold Callender. *New York Times Magazine*, May 28, 1939, pp. 4-5, 17.

In this article Mr. Callender gives an interesting cross-section of the English mind and character. He sees in England a nation founded on principles of character that will eventually come into conflict with other governments such as Germany, who base their life around the machinery of arms. The strength of the English, he feels, lies in their strong love of country, their ability to calmly "muddle through," and their tolerant moderation.

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Puerto Ricans Ask For Freedom

(Concluded from page 1)

dividually owned farms are very small.

Although the United States has held Puerto Rico for only 40 years, the island was ruled by Spain for nearly 400 years—therefore it has one of the longest histories of any place in the Western Hemisphere. Puerto Rico was discovered by Columbus on his second voyage to America, in 1493. Fifteen years later it was settled by one of Columbus' soldiers, but it never prospered. The expectations of gold which prompted the naming of the island Puerto Rico (rich port) collapsed quickly. There were few natives, and the settlers were too poor to buy slaves, and thus the island remained racially and politically Spanish down to the year 1898 when the United States wrenches it away with ease from the then weak and declining Spain.

Under American Control

Nineteen years later, in March 1917, the present form of administration was set up under an act of Congress. The island became a territory of the United States. It has an American governor appointed by the President of the United States. The inhabitants of the island are American citizens, and elect by adult suffrage a Senate of 19 members, and a House of Representatives of 39 members, all chosen for four years. A special commissioner elected by popular vote represents Puerto Rico in the House of Representatives in Washington, but he has no vote.

The relations between the United States

villages all over Puerto Rico. The island was brought within the American customs ring, and allowed a privilege unique among territories—that of retaining for its own purposes the customs duties collected at its ports and the proceeds of internal revenue taxes.

Rehabilitation Program

But in spite of all this effort, Puerto Rico remained poor. Its people could hardly seem to make enough money to live on. When the depression hit the United States, the position of the islanders became desperate. At one time during this period it was estimated that 82 per cent of the population was in need of federal relief. Exports had fallen off, factories were closing down, and agricultural prices dropping.

As a result, the United States government embarked upon a new program to help the Puerto Ricans. Four years ago the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration was established in Washington under the Department of the Interior to attempt to put Puerto Rico upon a solvent economic basis. Accounting for a substantial portion of the some \$35,000,000 spent by the United States government in Puerto Rico for rehabilitation purposes, the PRRA, as it is called, has devoted its main efforts to slum clearance, and to the resettling of 6,000 small landowners on reclaimed and improved lands, the encouragement and support of marketing co-



THE CAPITOL BUILDING AT SAN JUAN

One of the most difficult of all Puerto Rican problems is that of overpopulation. As a result of the American sanitary systems, hospitals, and medical care, the high death rate (particularly the infant mortality rate), which existed in Spanish days, has been greatly reduced. As a result Puerto Rico's very high birth rate has far outdistanced the death rate and doubled the population of the island in the two generations between 1900 and the present. In spite of the thousands of Puerto Ricans who have exercised their

Naturally there have been strong political repercussions on the island. The most violent opposition has come from a small but extremely vigorous group called the Nationalists which numbers about 5,000, and has been somewhat discredited due to an ill-advised attempt to assassinate the American Governor Winship last year—an act which sent several of the movement's leaders to jail. This group held—and still holds—that Puerto Rico should be independent, that its seizure by the United States was illegal, and that the island would be better off if it could shake itself free of the United States.

On the other extreme are the Puerto Rican and American owners of the needleworks industries, the bankers, the propertied classes, and so on who have benefited by American rule. Many of these people would like very much to see economic restrictions lifted, but they do not generally favor any break away from the United States control under which they have prospered.

Resentment Against U. S.

Probably the most important group today, however, is the large section of people whose wishes lie between the two extremes. For some time they have been divided on what course they should pursue. Some favored a limited independence under which the island would become a republic, but remain within the United States customs ring. Others want admission to the Union as a state.

A joint legislative committee has recently been sent to Washington from San Juan with a compromise proposal which seems to reflect the views of the Puerto Rican liberals and moderate groups. The committee will first ask for statehood, a request which is expected to meet with refusal. As an alternative it will suggest the following: Puerto Ricans shall have the right to elect their own governor after 1940. They shall be represented in the United States Congress by one man in the Senate and one in the House, both of whom shall have the right to vote. The commission will also repeat a petition introduced in 1934 for the right to draw up a new constitution for the island to be submitted to Congress for approval.

Will Congress accept any of the Puerto Rican suggestions? Will any change be made in the island's status? Puerto Ricans feel that the whole trouble is the indifference with which their problems are regarded in the United States. Two votes in Congress, they think, would remove this indifference. They want some sort of help right away. An expected increase in tourist traffic, the development of new industries, such as quinine and vanilla, and the building activities of the army and navy on the island may furnish some relief. But the whole problem is a very large one. Because of the fact that Puerto Rico occupies an important strategic position in the Caribbean, and because Latin American countries consider it to be a test case of our "good neighbor" policy, the administration in Washington is trying hard to find the answer to this perplexing set of problems.



NEW HOMES FOR PUERTO RICAN FARMERS

On this 433-acre tract of fertile land, an abandoned grapefruit farm, the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration has constructed homes for 263 impoverished Puerto Rican farmers. Each farmer and his family have about one acre of land, a concrete house, and the necessary equipment for earning a living.

and Puerto Rico over this period of 40 years have been far from happy. The island was poor to start with, of course. Such elementary things as sewage systems, highways, hospitals, and public schools were virtually nonexistent in 1898.

American engineers went to work on the island almost as soon as it was taken over. Fine roads were built through the mountainous interior, rivers were harnessed for their power resources, and electricity distributed throughout the island. Hospitals were built, modern drainage systems installed, diseases routed out, and little schools were built in the towns and vil-

lages. Heavy walls have been built along the mountain sides to hold the land, and irrigation systems introduced in the dry areas. Over 20 million trees have been planted in four years, and five low-cost housing projects established.

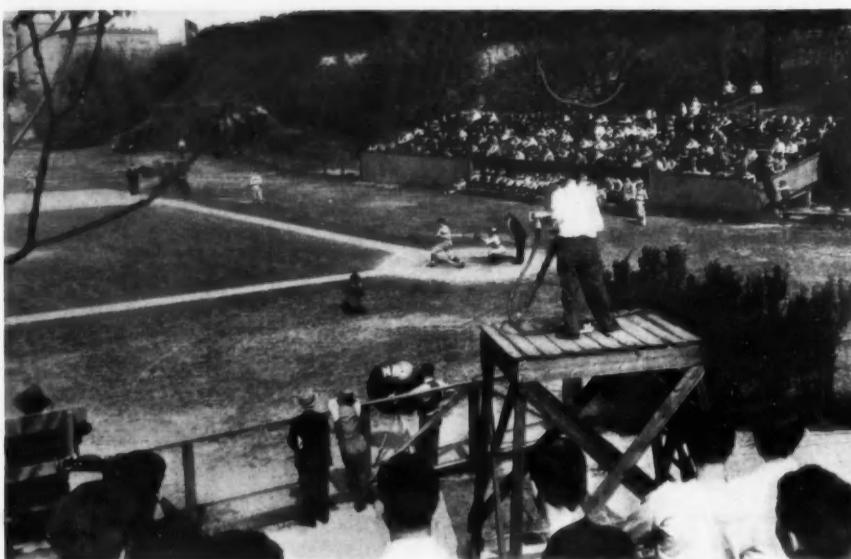
But all these efforts have not altered the underlying poverty of the island. Wages are low, farm incomes are lower, and unemployment stands at more than 150,000, a very large number for an island of that size. All these factors have convinced observers that a much larger program must be laid out on the basis of the island's own particular needs and problems.



CONDITIONS TO BE REMEDIED

Thousands of Puerto Ricans are forced to live in surroundings such as those pictured above. The Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration has inaugurated a housing program designed to aid those living in slum areas.

PRRA



TELEVISION'S FIRST BASEBALL GAME—PRINCETON VS. COLUMBIA

DOMESTIC

Civil Liberties Ruling

The recent Supreme Court decision involving the case of Mayor Hague of Jersey City is still being hailed as a decisive victory for democracy and civil liberties in the United States. The Court, in holding that no public official has the right to deny freedom of expression and assembly to law-abiding individuals or groups of citizens, puts new teeth in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. It is expected to help check any tendency toward the adoption of dictatorial techniques in this country.

ROOKIE IN THE BIG LEAGUE
HERBLOCK IN RALEIGH (N.C.) NEWS AND OBSERVER

It will be remembered that Mayor Hague, in refusing to allow members of the CIO to hold meetings in Jersey City, declared: "I am the law." The Supreme Court denies this to be the case when fundamental rights of individuals are involved.

The Hague decision is in line with the campaign now being carried on by the United States Department of Justice to cooperate with cities in the effort to protect civil liberties in all parts of the nation. Attorney General Frank Murphy, in a recent address to the national conference of mayors, urged these officials to be vigilant in seeing that the rights of free speech, free press, and free assembly be maintained in their communities. Mr. Murphy has also established a special bureau in the Department of Justice to assist in safeguarding civil liberties. In commenting on Mr. Murphy's efforts in this direction, as well as on the question of free speech in general, the New York Times has this to say:

"There are altogether too many persons and organizations in the United States who show their 'democracy' by denying to persons whose opinions they dislike the right of free speech and assembly. They demonstrate their hatred of communism, nazism, fascism by borrowing the methods of their enemies. Mr. Murphy touched the heart of the matter when he told the mayors that 'the first battleground of civil liberties is the local

communities.' Civil liberty begins at home. Be tolerant, respect liberty, and enforce the Bill of Rights locally. Then there will be no waiting for the decisions of the court, for there will be no denial of civil liberties."

Garner and 1940

The struggle between the conservative and New Deal Democrats has taken on new vigor as a result of the announcement made by friends of Vice-President Garner that he will try to win the Democratic nomination for presidency next year regardless of whether or not President Roosevelt seeks a third term. The New Dealers are saying privately, and some publicly, that if Mr. Garner and his friends attempt to get the nomination on a conservative, anti-New Deal platform, they will have a real fight on their hands, and the party will be split wide open.

Appeals are expected to be made to Mr. Garner and his supporters in Congress to refrain from dividing the Democratic party into two opposing camps, thereby jeopardizing its chances of winning the 1940 elections. The more moderate leaders are urging both the conservatives and the New Dealers to make certain compromises and work together as a unit. It will depend on how deeply the majority of leaders on both sides feel as to whether their differences can be patched up. If it becomes certain that the conservatives intend to wage a vigorous fight against the New Dealers in the party, it is thought by many political observers that President Roosevelt will run for another term.

Politics and Pensions

As was expected, the Townsend old-age pension plan suffered a severe defeat when it was put to a vote in the House of Representatives recently. The legislators in the lower house killed the bill, which would provide monthly pensions of \$200 for all persons over 60, by a 302-97 vote.

The Townsend-plan episode is an interesting example of political strategy on the part of the Democrats. They forced a vote on the bill, although they knew it would not pass, for several reasons. In the first place, the bill is put out of the way for the present session of Congress, at least. In the second place, 55 Republicans are on record as voting in favor of the bill—and that fact, the Democrats believe, will not help the Republican party in general, for the Townsend plan is regarded by many people as a "crack-pot" scheme. And in the third place, the way is now cleared for amendments to the Social Security Act enlarging and speeding up the old-age pensions provided for in the act.



The Week at Home

What the People of the World Are Doing

Those amendments will be offered in a few days, it is reported, and will probably pass with little difficulty.

The Mead Bill

Senator Mead of New York has introduced a bill into Congress which is designed to help "little" businessmen. The bill, which is reported to have the support of the President, would have the federal government insure loans of up to one million dollars to small business firms. At present, these small businesses find it very difficult to borrow money. It is very expensive for them to sell stocks, as larger companies do, and raise money in that way. The government's Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which makes loans to business firms, is usually not interested in small amounts. Private banks are not eager to make loans of that size, either, because they are afraid of losing their money.

The Mead bill would encourage banks to make such loans by guaranteeing that they would be repaid. Under the bill, the owner of a small business who wishes to borrow an amount up to a million dollars goes to a bank for the money. If the prospective borrower comes up to certain requirements, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation promises the bank that the loan will be repaid.

This system has been followed very successfully in regard to loans on new homes—the Federal Housing Administration guarantees loans to home builders, and it has done a great deal to stimulate construction. Supporters of the Mead bill believe that it will encourage "little" businessmen to expand their plants, buy new equipment, and thus encourage business in general. Of course, the government may lose some money on bad loans, but Senator Mead believes that the losses will not be great. The benefits which will come from the plan will more than offset such losses, in his opinion.

"The City"

A relatively new development in the motion-picture industry is the "documentary" film—a short subject which dramatizes some important social problem. The two outstanding examples of the documentary film are "The Plow That Broke the Plains" and "The River," both of which have been widely shown throughout the country. A few days ago, a four-reel film entitled "The City" was previewed at the New York World's Fair, and the enthusiastic reception which it received indicated that it may rank with the best in its field.

"The City" treats the growth of a great American industrial center. It shows the ill effects of overcrowding—lack of playgrounds, unsanitary living conditions, traffic accidents, and so on. Then it takes up experiments in "decentralizing" cities, in building smaller communities where city workers can live safely and healthfully.

Bikes and Hostels

A hundred years ago this spring, in the little town of Courthill, Scotland, a man named Kirkpatrick MacMillan invented the first bicycle. Today, thousands of Americans—young and old—are riding greatly improved successors to MacMillan's crude contraption. Within the last few years, bicycling has become extremely popular. City parks are crowded with cyclists riding for pleasure and exercise, and many persons are using bicycles

for week-end jaunts and cross-country journeys.

With the returning popularity of the bicycle, an organization known as American Youth Hostels, Inc., has grown to include more than 5,000 members. This organization, started in Massachusetts five years ago, sponsors "hostels" all over the country, on out-of-the-way trails and roads. A hostel is an inn or a house where members of the AYH may get a night's lodging for 25 cents, and when facilities for cooking are provided. In this way, vacation traveling is made very inexpensive; the AYH boasts that its members can see the country for as little as one dollar a day.

There are 75 hostels in New England, and



SENATOR JAMES MEAD

others located in 20 states. There is one loop of hostels in North Carolina, close to the Great Smoky National Park, and another in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin have a chain of 50 hostels, while there is another string in the Rocky Mountains around Denver.

Membership in the AYH costs \$1 for persons under 21, and \$2 for those over 21. The organization's headquarters are in Northfield, Massachusetts.

Flying Pullman

The largest land plane in the world, the DC-4, finished its cross-country jaunt recently, and is now on exhibition in the East. The two-million-dollar transport weighs more than 60,000 pounds; it is 97 feet long and 136 feet from wing-tip to wing-tip. It carries 42 passengers and a crew of five at a cruising speed of 190 miles an hour, and its range is 1,425 miles—about halfway across the continent. It is outfitted with new equipment, including a tricycle landing gear, which makes it one of the safest and most easily handled planes ever built, it is claimed.

Rate Reduction

Railroads in the eastern section of the country have announced that they intend to reduce their passenger rates on round-trip journeys within the next few weeks. The coach fare, which is now 2½ cents a mile, will range from 2¼ cents to 1 7/10 cents, depending on the length of the trip. A round-trip ticket between New York and Chicago will cost only \$30.90—\$14.85 less than at present. Pullman fares will be reduced, too.

This announcement indicates that the railroads have come around to the policy that it is better to charge low rates and thus attract more passengers. They have not al-

Home and Abroad

What We're Doing, Saying, and Thinking

ways believed so. Until 1936, the passenger rate in the East was 3½ cents a mile. When the Interstate Commerce Commission forced the railroads to lower the rate to 2 cents, the railroad companies protested vigorously.

It turned out that they took in more money at the lower rate, but in spite of that fact, they asked for and received permission to boost the passenger rate to 2½ cents about a year ago. Evidently that increase has not worked out as well as they anticipated.

Plot and Counterplot

The congressional committee investigating un-American activities—better known as the Dies Committee—has been listening to an



HUNGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CSAKY

amazing tale lately. Witnesses testified that Jews and Communists are planning to overthrow the government in August, and that in order to save the nation several other groups—such as the "Knights of the White Camellias"—plan to stage a counter-revolution, and set up a dictatorship with its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

The "dictator" was to be George Van Horn Moseley, retired brigadier general. When General Moseley was called before the committee, he had little to offer concerning the proposed revolution, but he had a great deal to say about the dangers of Communism and the activities of Jews.

While the whole affair has attracted a great deal of attention in the newspapers, there are few people who attach any importance to it. Most observers dismiss the startling revelations as 99 per cent imagination. But because the story does make interesting reading, it has been played up by the papers.

FOREIGN

No Popular Front

What slight chance the British Labor party may have had to capture a parliamentary majority in the elections that probably will be held this year appears to have dimmed with the decision of the party's leaders, the other day, to reject the proposal for a British popular front. Certain Labor politicians, having in mind the victory of the French Popular Front in the spring of 1936, had sought to persuade their party to join with the Liberals and with the Communists in a coalition to oust Premier Chamberlain's Conservatives who have been in control of the government



"LOOK SILLY THOUGH?"



HERBLOCK IN RALEIGH (N.C.) NEWS AND OBSERVER

since 1931. Their proposal had a chilly reception. The great mass of Labor leaders, in some ways as conservative as the "tories" whom they repeatedly attack in the House of Commons, look askance at any union with the Communists.

The election, it is now certain, will find Labor standing alone. And standing alone it is hardly likely to get very far. It may gather a few scattered seats here and there in constituencies that regard any change in the government as preferable to Conservative rule. But it will take much more than that to cut down the present government's majority of 420 of the 615 seats in the Commons.

For its virtual paralysis, the British Labor party has only itself to thank. The Labor leaders suffer from a peculiar weakness. They are daring and outspoken only when they lack authority. Once in power, as has been proved again and again, they are seized with panic at the thought of responsibility. They abandon their own electoral program and it usually remains for the Conservatives to carry out the Labor pledges. Their thunder stolen, they seem condemned to remain for a long time "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition," and the Conservative party's most invaluable asset.

Swastika Over Bolivia

With Nazi penetration checked in Brazil and Argentina, the German government, anxious to gain a secure foothold in the Western Hemisphere, has now turned its attention toward Bolivia, apparently with considerable success. The recent deal made with the Bolivian government for the barter of oil from expropriated American properties in return for German manufactured goods is now being supplemented by further exchanges. From the standpoint of Pan-American relations the most important of these is the right granted to Germany to establish an air base at Trinidad. Though the Germans, who own the Bolivian air transport system, have had a landing field in that country for some years, it was of no strategic value. The new base, however, will enable the Nazi government to install a regular transatlantic service.

What is feared is that the German government will make use of the base not solely for commercial but for military purposes as well. The base will put German military planes within striking distance of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina. Considering that Bolivia still remembers her defeat by Paraguay in the Chaco War, the possibility of Bolivia's conspiring with Germany against Paraguay is certainly not to be excluded. Though the country has not yet recovered from the Chaco war and still faces immense difficulties in reconstruction, the Bolivian general staff has just embarked upon a two-year rearment program, admittedly to place the nation on a war footing. To that end, the German government, in exchange for the aerial rights, is to supply Bolivia with war planes, guns, and motorized army equipment.

Hungarian Parliament

The new Hungarian parliament, chosen by secret ballot for the first time in 20 years, will meet in Budapest within the next few days with its ranks swollen by Nazi adherents. The government managed to retain a decisive majority at the recent election. But while in the previous session it had to deal with an opposition so divided in itself as to be



ANCIENT METHODS OF PLOWING ON A LARGE ESTATE IN HUNGARY

thoroughly ineffectual, it is now faced with a Nazi party opposition whose 53 members—out of a total membership of 260—have pledged themselves to act and vote as one, a decision that will be put into immediate practice when the Nazi delegates appear at the opening meeting as a single body, each wearing a green shirt, breeches, and topboots.

The successful electoral drive of the Nazis, who until now had only six seats in the chamber, is the result partly of dissatisfaction with government policy, partly of the "boring from within" tactics employed by the German government to enlarge its sphere of influence. There is no question but that the Hungarian peasant is discouraged with the present government. For over 15 years he has been waiting for the day when it would redeem its pledge to solve the agrarian problem by the distribution of large estates. So far he has waited in vain. The Nazis, allegedly aided by a slush fund from Berlin, found the peasant receptive to their blandishments and the promises of a "new era."

The government party is apparently alive to the threats that have been brought into sharp relief by the election campaign. Interference by German agents in the elections has already been met with a warning by the Hungarian foreign minister, Count Stephen Csaky, that such action will no longer be tolerated. Much more important, it is realized, is legislation to appease peasant claims. Plans are now being drawn up for division of the large estates, some of which, still operated on a semi-feudal basis, are 300,000 acres in size.

Refugees

The tragic plight of the 907 Jewish refugee passengers of the German liner *St. Louis* who cruised off Florida and Cuba for several days last week, vainly seeking some country which would allow them to land, has served to remind the world that the problem of refugees has not been solved. Committees have been formed, money has been raised, and a few score thousand victims of political and racial persecution aided in emigrating, but the march of political events has increased the number of refugees with far greater rapidity than means for settling them can be devised.

To the 3,500,000 Jews of Germany and Austria there have been added this year about half a million objects of Nazi persecution in the conquered regions of Bohemia and Moravia. In addition, Hungary seems to be slipping further and further into the Nazi camp, thus placing in jeopardy the future security of its now nearly 500,000 Jews. Within the German-dominated areas there has

been no let-up in the relentless pressure against the Jews. Various ways of getting them out of the country have been devised. A Jew is held in a concentration camp for several months, for instance. Subjected to the most brutal treatment during that period, he is suddenly released and told that if he is not out of Germany within so many days, he will come back into the camp to stay.

About 400,000 Jews are expected to leave Germany if they can. Jews have been leaving Austria at the rate of about 200 every day—which still leaves 200,000 to be evacuated. At the same time the areas open to settlement are closing. In spite of all the optimistic talk about Jewish "havens" in Rhodesia, British Guiana, and so forth, little has been done to facilitate the flow of refugees into these regions, and the problem is rapidly



STILL NO SOLUTION
HERBLOCK IN HAZELTON (PA.) PLAIN SPEAKER

entering a stage more crucial than that following the Nazi program last winter.

Floating School

With battle lines in a constant state of flux, with buildings and industries in constant danger of destruction from the skies, the Chinese government is showing a great deal of resourcefulness in keeping business, commerce, and agriculture functioning as usual. Even education is not being neglected—badly pressed as China is. We have already mentioned in these columns how entire universities have packed up and toiled over the long roads into the far west—faculty and students together—to set up their administration and classes anew in caves or in huts.

Another innovation in education is a floating school, equipped with radios, books, classrooms, and an auditorium which moves through the intricate network of rivers, canals, and lakes, bringing both adult and child education to the harried peoples of the Chinese republic. Most of the lectures and demonstrations are of a practical nature, such as public health, air-raid precautions, and so on, but current events, reading, and music are not neglected. China's first floating school does not seem very strange in China, of course, where there are so many rivers and canals that millions of Chinese live on junks and step ashore only at infrequent intervals.



EARLY SETTLERS CLEAR LAND FOR CROPS

(From an illustration in "The Pageant of America," courtesy Yale University Press.)

Historical Backgrounds

By David S. Muzzey and Paul D. Miller

Exploitation of America's Natural Resources

UNTIL relatively recent years, little attention was paid to the serious problem of the wastage of the great natural resources with which the United States was endowed. Year after year, decade after decade, as the nation became industrialized, great quantities of those precious natural possessions were taken from the soil. In the quest for riches, great quantities of petroleum and gas were destroyed. The destruction of the timber lands constitutes one of the most shameful chapters in our national history. Coal was taken from the soil without any regard for the general public good. Last but not least in importance is the terrific waste which has come through the destruction of the soil itself, which produces the very foodstuffs upon which the national safety and well-being depend to such a large extent.



DAVID S. MUZZEY

It is difficult, indeed, to measure accurately the extent of the destruction of the nation's natural resources through continuous exploitation. In his excellent book, "Men and Resources," Professor J. Russell Smith gives us an idea of the seriousness of the problem. "The American people became wasters, the greatest wasters in the world," he writes. "Every year the United States has less good land than the year before. Every year the United States has less of useful minerals and less wood than the year before. . . . If we continue to destroy, waste, burn, and throw away valuable things as we have for the last hundred years, the United States cannot be a permanent country," he concludes.

In the matter of oil, Professor Smith elaborates, "we waste much more than we get, and can never get the millions and billions of barrels of oil that were lost for want of sensible planning of the oil fields." The National Resources Board reported that in 1934 "enough gas was being wasted in a single oil field to supply all the gas then used in all American homes." Mr. Smith goes on to show that "we have been using timber in the United States four times as fast as it grows." As for the waste of soil through erosion and other destructive processes, the serious effects are discussed in considerable detail elsewhere in this issue of THE AMERICAN OBSERVER. It need only be repeated that man-induced erosion is having serious effects upon more than one million acres of land, or more than half of the total area of the United States.

That such destruction and waste cannot go on indefinitely without endangering the

national safety and threatening general impoverishment should be obvious, for these natural resources are not inexhaustible. The principal reason, however, why there has been such waste has been that the American people have acted on the assumption that these resources were limitless and inexhaustible. There has been general planlessness. Each generation has sought to enrich itself, with little thought of the national good or of succeeding generations. The result is that, unless this trend is reversed, the United States will go the way of all other nations which have reached pinnacles of economic power and strength only to decline.

At least part of the responsibility for this destruction of the nation's wealth of resources must be placed at the door of the government itself. Hundreds of thousands of acres of valuable land were generously given by the government. The intention had been to make the public domain available to settlers and thus for national development. Unfortunately a large part of it fell into the hands of unscrupulous business interests which exploited it ruthlessly for their own advantage. The whole system of land disposal was characterized by fraud. As Hacker and Kendrick point out in their excellent history of the post-Civil War period: "The reckless land policy of the period following the Civil War deprived the American people of a reserve of mineral, oil, and water properties whose value is incalculable."

Conservation Movement

Through all these years of exploitation, public opinion was apathetic with respect to the necessity of conservation. Only a few far-sighted individuals realized that steps would have to be taken if the depletion were not to be continued. Until the advent of the first Roosevelt administration, little progress was made in the direction of conservation. One of the lasting contributions of Theodore Roosevelt was his interest in the problem and the steps taken by him to prevent further waste and destruction. He appointed a National Conservation Commission to study the entire problem and start the conservation movement. He began the work of land reclamation and irrigation in various parts of the country.

While his efforts were totally inadequate to meet the great needs then existing, Roosevelt did go far toward stirring public opinion and putting the wheels of conservation in action. "Alone of our Presidents up to his time," write the historians Morison and Commager, "Theodore Roosevelt had grasped the problem of conservation as a unit and comprehended its basic relationship to national welfare, and until the accession of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency, none of his successors had the boldness or the broadness of vision to carry on the work he so hopefully inaugurated."

Personalities in the News

WHEN Hugh Hammond Bennett graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1903, he took a civil service examination and went to work for the government in the Bureau of Soils. During the next third of a century, he studied soil erosion, soil and water conservation, from every angle. And when President Roosevelt set up a soil conservation agency in 1934, as part of the New Deal's relief activities, he found that Hugh Bennett was the best man available to head it. A year later, Congress made the Soil Conservation Service a permanent part of the Department of Agriculture, and Dr. Bennett has been its chief since that time.

Early in his career as a soils expert, Dr. Bennett realized that this nation is wasting its soil extravagantly. But when he urged his superiors in the Bureau of Soils to make a vigorous campaign against soil erosion, they paid little attention to him. In his book, "Behold Our Land," Russell Lord says about Dr. Bennett:

He kept pushing the findings at the risk of his official neck. His bosses in the Soils Bureau were not persuaded. They shunted him on exploratory voyages over other lands, and tried to shut him up, in all friendliness, but with the terrible inflexibility of bureaucrats who have finally made up their minds. For more than a quarter of a century Bennett kept pressing his findings. Suddenly, in 1934, they told him he had been right all along and ordered him to form and throw into the battle against erosion on farmland a field force even greater than that of the Forest Service. If ever a democratic government in its mystic ways of change rewarded tenacity and patriotism without the formality of striking off a medal, our government did so, four years ago, when it made Hugh Bennett chief of our Soil Conservation Service.



H. H. BENNETT

policy will not permit it. But he spends practically all his waking hours planning bigger and better airplanes for the future of American aviation.

ALTHOUGH a great deal of visiting back and forth is carried on between high officials of the western European states, it is very seldom that a member of the Politburo, that group of men surrounding Soviet Dictator Josef Stalin, ever ventures beyond Russian borders. But one of these men is to leave Russia shortly on a visit to England. He is Clementi Voroshilov, who, as minister of war and commander of the Red Army, heads the largest military force in the world.

Voroshilov's career has been typical of a high Soviet official. Born of a working-class family in 1881, he went to work in a mine only six years later. Under the oppressive working conditions and starvation wages he developed a hatred for czarism at a very early age. While only a boy he was arrested for refusing to doff his cap to an officer, and at the age of 22 he joined the Communist party, taking an active part in the abortive revolution of 1905. When the movement was driven underground he stayed with it in Russia. In 1917 he emerged as leader of a Ukrainian army, and when the Communist revolution succeeded, Voroshilov was appointed the leader of all the Soviet cavalry divisions.

When Lenin died, Soviet leaders began quarreling among themselves, and it was Voroshilov's good fortune to have sided with Stalin, the victor. As a result he was made minister of war, and has remained the supreme head of all the Soviet's military forces ever since. A quiet man, a crack shot with a rifle, slow of speech, and rather small of stature, Voroshilov is a very popular as well as powerful figure in Russia.

PARTLY for the reason that Puerto Rico occupies a strategic position in the Caribbean, President Roosevelt has recently appointed as governor of that island a naval man, Rear Admiral William Daniel Leahy. Although brought up in two inland states, Iowa and Wisconsin, Leahy's career from the time he left high school down to the present has been closely identified with the navy. Upon graduation from Annapolis in 1897, he was assigned at once to the battleship *Oregon* which was a year later to make its famous 15,000-mile run around Cape Horn to engage the Spanish fleet in Caribbean waters. Subsequently he participated in nearly every American naval campaign of consequence—in the Boxer rebellion in China, in the Philippine insurrection, and in the troubles in Nicaragua, Haiti, and Mexico. For his service in the Atlantic convoy during the World War he was awarded the Navy Cross.

During all this time Leahy rose in rank. From a midshipman he eventually moved up to commander of a mine squadron, and then to chief of the naval ordnance bureau. In 1936 President Roosevelt appointed him to the important position of chief of naval operations, a station he remained in until this year. Known in the navy as a "sailor's admiral" and, more intimately, as "Old Bill," Rear Admiral Leahy was well liked and respected by officers and men. His quiet manner of speech and his open and courteous manner of dealing with associates is expected to serve him well in the difficult task of governing the island of Puerto Rico.



GLENN MARTIN



ADMIRAL LEAHY

New Theories of Education Tried at St. John's College, Maryland

FOR almost a hundred years, St. John's College has been existing in the shadow of the cold gray stones of the United States Naval Academy. The thousands of visitors who go to quiet Annapolis on the Chesapeake each year are interested primarily in seeing the home of the future admirals. Some of them indifferently drive by St. John's. A few comment briefly about the mellowed brick buildings before passing on to other spots. However, if a revolutionary experiment in education now being conducted at St. John's is as successful as its founders hope, many more people will become aware of the little red university in the capital of the state of Maryland.

Return to Old Method

The new method at St. John's is in reality a return to an old method. It is a return to the great books—the classics—as the basis of learning. Curriculums, as developed in the average American university, have been thrown out; textbooks of the familiar variety with their summaries and their comments by professors have been discarded. Students, instead of selecting the easiest courses from a long list, learn to think by reading and discussing the ideas of the greatest writers of the

of their personalities and their theories. Barr, the president of the school, is the son of a southern minister; Buchanan, the dean, is the son of a New England doctor. While both were at Oxford University as Rhodes scholars, their friendship developed and their theory that the way to get educated is to read the classics was born. Later, when they were members of the faculty of the University of Virginia, they discussed the project so that Barr can say, "We have been thinking about this plan for 20 years."

Back of the system as it is being developed at St. John's is the criticism of the present elective plan of courses found in most colleges. As introduced by Dr. Eliot at Harvard, and as modified in the past years, students have the right to choose the courses which are in accord with their individual interests. In many cases this means that undergraduates take only specialized and technical courses, while in other instances, they seek merely the easiest route to a degree. The emphasis, critics say, has been too much on the materialistic, too much on methods of earning a living.

Some Criticisms

Many educators have agreed in whole or in part with this diagnosis. But there are also many who will not agree with Barr and Buchanan in their contention that the foundations of liberal education are found in the neglected works of the masters, and that only upon an acquaintance with them can be built an educated mind.

There are some who will not admit that the line between "practical education" and what these men call "liberal education" can be so finely drawn.

And, of course, that naturally raises the questions: Who are the masters? What books should be read? Barr and Buchanan have set up a five-point criterion to guide them. A great book, according to their philosophy, should be one that: Has been read by the largest number of persons from year to year since its first appearance; has the largest number of possible interpretations; raises questions about the great themes in human thought; is a work of fine art; and is a masterpiece of liberal art.

Critics of the St. John's system have made much of these criteria and the selections which were based upon them. They say there is too much difference of opinion, even among scholars, as to what is fine art; there has been the suggestion that the possible interpretations of a book depend upon special interests of the reader. The defenders of the plan minimize these objections. They admit that the 126 books selected are not all the good books, and say the list is constantly being revised. But, they maintain, by a thorough knowledge of these volumes the human mind can be well trained. Furthermore, college should be largely an introduction to the thinkers of the ages and their thoughts. It should arouse a great thirst for knowledge. With these books as a background, the student can progress.

System at Work

How does the system operate? When it was introduced in 1937 students then in school had the privilege of taking either the old or the new. But now all students are enrolled in the new system, and in 1942 the first entire class to complete the plan will be graduated.

Before they get a degree, however, they will know the 126 books backward and forward, they must show a competence in the liberal arts, ability to read at least two foreign languages, know mathematics through elementary calculus, and have passed 300



THE LIBRARY BUILDING AT ST. JOHN'S

hours of scientific work in laboratories.

The laboratory requirements surprise some people who think that the students spend all their time in the library. As a matter of fact, however, they spend three hours each week in the laboratory. There, instead of performing a series of unrelated experiments, they try to trace the history of scientific progress. They learn their mathematics from the great mathematicians—Euclid, Apollonius, Descartes, Newton, Russell; their science from the most famous scientists—Galen, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Galileo, and others. In their experiments, they repeat the epic-making steps in the history of science, experiments that have influenced the whole line of scientific progress.

In addition to the three hours of laboratory work, the students spend two hours at lectures, four in discussion seminars, and 10 in tutorials—small recitation classes. Throughout these activities, the teachers lead the discussions on the arguments presented in the books. They do not present the ideas of Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, they merely bring the mind of the boy in contact with the mind of the great.

That fact, say the advocates of the plan, is one of the greatest advantages. Men like Sophocles, Freud, Moliere, Cicero, Grotius, Bentham are the real faculty of St. John's College. "Aren't you sorry," asks Mr. Barr, "for the students in all the other colleges who have nobody to teach them but oafs like me?"

The future of the plan is still somewhat uncertain. The finances, although improving, are still in bad shape. Then, there are critics.

Some of these say that the courses do not place enough emphasis upon contemporary problems. But, advocates counter, students are encouraged to join extracurricular clubs and forums in which these problems are discussed. And, basically, they add, our problems are the same ones

with which the great thinkers have been wrestling in the past.

The philosopher, John Dewey, has been one of the leading opponents. He admits that this type of education might be the best. But, he says, ordinary people cannot master the work. This may be a valid criticism, but the faculty at St. John's refuses to admit it. They say that their boys are absorbing the knowledge and are enjoying the process. They confess that it is hard work, but say that the ideas advanced by the geniuses have been understood by millions of men in the past. They merely require the reader to think. If students are willing to work hard when they study, they can have as much leisure time as boys in other schools.

There are other critics who say that many boys go to college primarily to learn how to make a living. In these, St. John's frankly admits, it is uninterested. The ability to read and write and reason will be no handicap in a job, they say, but education other than that designed to further these qualities, is not education but training, adding that "every animal can be trained for a job, man alone can be educated in the use of reason and free will."

Summing up the aims of the college, the report of the president said:

We Americans in our eagerness to open and exploit a continent have emphasized the practical, the utilitarian, the economic. We have practiced brilliantly the useful arts. But, in doing so, we have rediscovered what our ancestors knew: that back of the practical lies theory, that true utility depends on distinguishing means from ends, that economic goods are the means to life but not its sufficient end. In pursuing the useful arts, we have been led back to the liberal arts: the arts of apprehending, understanding, and knowing. It was to teach these higher, and exclusively human, arts that our ancestors founded and endowed the "college of liberal arts." For they knew that it is only by practicing the liberal arts, by understanding and knowing, that the human animal becomes a free man. It is only by discipline in these arts that spiritual, moral, and civil liberties can be achieved and preserved.

The debate over this viewpoint will likely continue for some time. But until experience proves otherwise, critics are finding it difficult to refute Milton S. Mayer when he says in *Harpers* magazine:

There is no magic in books; no guarantee goes with them. Men have read them and still turned out bad. But we want our children to learn how to think; the men who wrote these books thought well. We want our children to think about important things; the men who wrote immortal did that. Books are only teachers, and, as such, are only means to an end. The end is men who think for themselves. If our liberal institutions survive another fifty or one hundred years, St. John's College hopes to have contributed liberally educated men to their support.

Walter Lippmann is even more enthusiastic, predicting that men will someday say that St. John's was the seedbed of the American Renaissance. Mr. Barr, whose hopes and dreams are tied up in the success of this rebirth of a college and a rebirth of learning, says he is more than satisfied. The boys "have learned to think better, to write better, and to talk better. Their intelligence has developed."



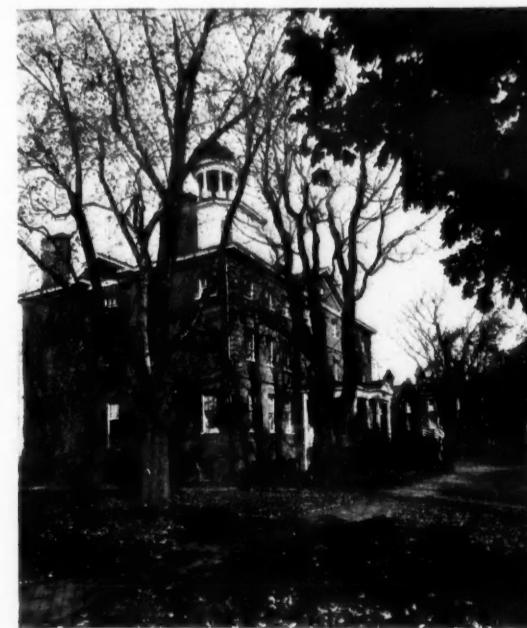
STRINGFELLOW BARR

ages. They no longer read books about the books of Plato and Hobbes and Rousseau. They read the books written by those masters. They no longer meet the plays of Sophocles and the theories of Malthus as filtered through the mind of an instructor; they study the original plays and theories. By this method, it is impossible for a student to get a Bachelor of Arts degree without ever having heard of Lobachevski, Kepler, Apollonius, or a hundred odd other great thinkers and writers of the past. In short, by the substitution of great books for specialized courses in business administration, engineering, and so on, the idea of educating people "to live instead of to earn a living" is tried out.

St. John's has had a long and varied history. It grew out of King William's School, established in 1696, so that only Harvard and William and Mary antedate it in this country. During the early days of the colonies, it was such an outstanding institution that George Washington sent his adopted son and his nephews there. But after the Naval Academy was founded, St. John's seemed to have passed its zenith. The students were jealous of the carefully groomed midshipmen, and enrollment, never large, dropped. After the depression of 1929, things went from bad to worse. Debts blocked all progress. Buildings and equipment fell into disrepair. Faculty salaries were slashed, and the college and its administration in general enjoyed a poor reputation. As a near-fatal blow, the Association of American Colleges took away St. John's rating.

Two Men—One Idea

It was when the future looked so foreboding that two men—Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan—took charge. To a great extent, the college now is a reflection



ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE
McDOWELL HALL—THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

The Problem of Soil Erosion

(Concluded from page 1)

Altogether, the United States has about 610 million acres of land which is being farmed or which is suitable for farming. According to Hugh H. Bennett, chief of the Soil Conservation Service (see page 6 of this paper):

"About 50 million acres of once fertile land in this country have been essentially ruined for practical cultivation by erosion. Another 50 million acres are in condition almost as serious. About 100 million acres still in cultivation have been seriously impoverished by loss of soil; and about 100 million acres more of cultivated land are being depleted of productive soil at an alarming rate."

In other words, one-sixth of our farmland—as much land as there is in all of Illinois, Ohio, North Carolina, and Maryland—has had the topsoil eaten off, so that there is nothing left but rock and sand, while another sixth is beginning to suffer from erosion. Every year, it is said, *three billion tons* of soil are washed out of the nation's fields and pastures—enough to fill a freight train of half a million cars!

Early Years

All this is the result of careless, shortsighted methods of using the land and the plants which grow on it. The men—farmers and lumberjacks—who were responsible for this condition should not be judged too harshly, however. They acted from necessity, and few of them realized what they were doing. When the first settlers came to North America, they found a vast expanse of tree-covered valleys and hills, and beyond it, an even greater area of grass-covered plains. They had to cut the trees and plow up the grass before the land itself was of much value to them. It was necessary to turn those virgin acres into cultivated fields—but it was also the first step in starting soil erosion.

In the South, cotton and tobacco were the principal crops. Both are hard on the soil; that is, they "wear it out" rapidly. Planters cleared fields, grew several crops, and when their harvests became small, moved west to new land. Behind them they left barren hillsides from which the rain washed the topsoil, and into which it cut gullies and gorges. The classic example of this form of erosion is in Stewart County, Georgia. There 40,000 acres, a third of the entire county, is scarred with chasms 50 to 200 feet deep—started, it is said, from a trickle of water running off a farmer's barn 40 years ago.

In Iowa, Illinois, and neighboring states, farmers ripped the covering off the ground to grow corn, and erosion has taken its toll as a result. Farther north, in the states around the Great Lakes, the hillsides were laid bare by lumbering gangs. Michigan, which once had 380 million boardfeet of

timber, now has only 28 million. Now, when heavy rains fall on the slopes which were once covered with trees, there is nothing to hold the water. It rushes to the valley floors, carrying with it many tiny particles of loose soil. As Pare Lorentz wrote in "The River":

Spring and fall the water comes down, and for years the old river has taken a toll from the Valley more terrible than ever she does in flood times.
Year in, year out, the water comes down From a thousand hillsides, washing the top off the Valley.
For fifty years we dug for cotton and moved West when the land gave out.
For fifty years we plowed for corn, and moved on when the land gave out.
Corn and wheat; wheat and cotton—we planted and plowed with no thought for the future—
And four hundred million tons of topsoil, Four hundred million tons of our most valuable natural resource have been washed into the Gulf of Mexico every year.

Nor is that the only damage. River beds are not large enough to hold the tremendous quantities of water dumped into them, and as a result we have had such devastating floods as those that struck the Ohio River Valley in 1936 and 1937. Tearing the cover off the land has not been entirely responsible for these floods, of course, but it has certainly helped to make them worse.

On the western plains, wind rather than rain is responsible for soil erosion. The same wind which blows today whipped over those plains for centuries without doing any damage—because a heavy mat of grass held the soil down. But during the years between 1870 and 1900, great herds of cattle and sheep were put to graze on that mat of grass. The herds were too large; in many places, they killed out the grass entirely. And shortly after 1900, wheat farmers began edging farther and farther west, with tractors and plows which tore up the sod. As long as there was moisture, wheat grew, but when the rain—which was always scanty—practically failed, the result was the dust storms which we have mentioned before. Conditions in the dust bowl are better now, because there has been more rain in recent months, but the storms are not stopped by any means. Another long drought, and they will return in full force.

Control Methods

There is no single method which will stop soil erosion. Every farm, and every field on it, must be treated differently, according to the particular conditions found there. The chief problem is to hold the water on the land. Replanting trees and grass will do it, and thousands of acres have been treated this way. Cultivated fields must be handled differently, however. Some of them can be "terraced" with parallel ridges of soil one to three feet high on the sides of hills. Erosion can be checked on others by "contour plowing"; that is, plowing according to the slope of the land. "Strip cropping," the system of planting rows of corn or cotton between rows of grass or leguminous plants, which hold the soil, works in some cases. The rotation of crops—wheat one year, alfalfa the next, for example—helps.

Small dams have been thrown across hundreds of gullies to check erosion on pastureland. Most of them are "check" dams, made of logs and brush, designed to slow down the flow of water rather than to stop it completely. Many sturdier dams have been built too, and ponds have formed behind them. In the building of dams and the planting of trees, the CCC and the WPA have been of great



SCS PHOTO

TO CHECK THE RUSH OF WATER
A control dam is built in Minnesota to establish a reservoir for water and fish conservation.

help to the Soil Conservation Service.

After the experts have worked out these scientific methods of treating the land, the SCS must persuade farmers to adopt them—and that is another problem. While no farmer likes to abuse his land intentionally, most of them find it necessary to get everything they can from their fields in order to make a living for themselves and their families. So the SCS officials must prove that their methods will put just as much or more money in the farmers' bank accounts. They have had the help of another government agency, the AAA, for farmers who wish to receive government loans and payments must agree to take part in the SCS program for soil conservation. But other methods of persuasion have been used, and the most satisfactory is the "demonstration project."

Projects

By this method, the SCS persuades several farmers in a district to try its plans. In nearly every case, those farmers have better looking fields and better crops than their neighbors. The latter see what is being done, so they follow suit. The SCS stands ready to help by supplying advice, assistance, even some labor and materials, although the farmers themselves must contribute.

When a large group of farmers become interested in the conservation program, they form a "soil conservation district." This is a voluntary organization; no one is forced to come into it. However, there are more than 100 of them in the nation at present, and they include more than 50 million acres of land. That is only a twelfth of the nation's farmland, of course, but it is a substantial start.

The Lindale district in Texas is a good example of what can be done through demonstration projects. There are 80 demonstration farms in the district. Each has been carefully surveyed by the SCS experts, and methods to meet the peculiar problems of each have been worked out. Erosion has been practically stopped on those farms; a third of the land has been put back to grass or shrubs, the amount of pastureland has been increased, trees have been planted, and small check dams have been placed across a number of gullies. And as a result, the farmers on these demonstration projects have more than doubled their income!

Another example of the SCS activities is the Wind River basin in Wyoming—land which is used for sheep raising. Before the Service set to work, the basin supported about 3,000 sheep. The only source of water was Wind River itself, and the sheep had to be held close to it. Consequently, the land close to the river was overgrazed, while that farther back was not used at all. Under the SCS, a number of water holes were dug and dams were built to form reservoirs. Now more than 4,000 sheep graze in the basin; none of the land is overgrazed, and much more of it is used.

The SCS has ambitious plans for soil conservation on a large scale. One hundred million acres of the Great Plains region were surveyed recently, and the SCS experts mapped a program for checking erosion there. According to that program, the region should cut down its wheat acreage

by one-third, its cotton acreage by one-fifth, its corn acreage by one-tenth; it should increase its feed crops by one-fifth, its farm pasture by one-fifth, and its range by one-tenth. When those adjustments are made, it is believed, erosion will be well under control.

This whole field of soil conservation is relatively new, and what has been done seems insignificant compared with what there is yet to do. But a start has been made; the people of the nation are growing more and more conscious of the need for far-sighted planning in regard to soil and water, and that is the first step toward solving what is indeed a serious national problem.

SMILES



"YOU WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING OF IT?"
GARRY IN AMERICAN BOY

A New Yorker was robbed of \$250 in a revolving door. One can't be too careful of the persons one goes around with.

—Washington Post

"How are you getting on at home since your wife went away?"

"Fine. I've reached the highest point of efficiency. I can put my socks on from either end."

—PARADE

A young flying officer, stationed somewhere near Egypt, while flying near the Great Pyramids, carrying out exercises in navigation and working with a sextant to discover his exact position, suddenly turned to the pilot and said, "Take off your hat."

"Why?" asked the pilot.

"Because, according to my calculations, we are now inside St. Paul's cathedral."

—TELEPHONE REVIEW

"Are those eggs strictly fresh?"

"George, feel those eggs and see if they are cool enough to sell yet." —Annapolis Log

"Lost your job as a caddy?" asked one boy. "Yes," replied the other, "I could do the work all right, but I couldn't learn not to laugh."

—CLIPPED

"You know, you're not a bad-looking girl."

"Oh, you'd say so even if you didn't think so."

"Well, we're even then. You'd think so even if I didn't say so."

—CLIPPED

"How would you like your egg served, sir?"

"Is there any difference in price?"

"None whatever, sir."

"Then serve it on a thick slice of ham."

—CANADIAN



SCS PHOTO

BEFORE AND AFTER
Sudan grass was planted on this farm to halt wind erosion which had done severe damage to the land.